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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MALIKI RESHAPING KARBALA POLITICAL SCENE IN
AFTERMATH OF ELECTIONS

Classified By: PRT Team Leader John Kincannon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Senior political leaders tell the PRT that Prime Minister Maliki has been the decision-maker in determining the Karbala political line-up following the January 31 elections. Maliki reportedly brokered the political deal between the Dawlat al-Qanun (State of Law) and Amal al-Rafidain (Hope of Two Rivers) slates to form the next provincial government, assigned different players their jobs in the new provincial government, and has offered current Governor Aqeel al-Khazali an unspecified job in Baghdad. A leading member of the outgoing Provincial Council (PC) predicts the new PC will not concentrate on improving basic services, but will instead focus on preparations to win the national political election in 2010. Meanwhile, leading Karbala vote-getter Yusuf al-Haboubi has begun a public relations campaign asserting his right to the governorship. End Summary.

¶2. (C) According to numerous local contacts, Prime Minister Maliki (a native of Karbala province's Hindiya district) has been the king-maker in determining the political lineup in Karbala since the January 31 elections. The PM's strong role is natural, given that both Dawlat al-Qanun and Amal al-Rafidain are Da'wa-based parties that consider themselves loyal and answerable to Maliki. The secretary of the Provincial Council told us that outgoing Governor Aqeel (who was reelected to a seat on the PC) met with Maliki on March 9 and was offered a job in Baghdad, a position he will take rather than return to the relative anonymity of being a normal PC member.

Governor, PC Chair Slots Decided

¶3. (C) According to current Deputy PC Chairman Hamid al-Torfi and other reliable sources, Maliki brokered the new leadership slate, which will be formally announced on or about March 18. The new Governor will be the leading candidate from the Dawlat al-Qanun (State of Law) slate, Amal al-Din al-Hir, currently the Director General of Agriculture. The PC Chairman will be Mohammed Hamid al-Musawi from Amal al-Rafidain (Two Rivers), with his brother, Abbas Hamid al-Musawi, will become First Deputy Governor. (The Musawi brothers are related to Maliki by marriage through their brother, Major Ali, who currently serves in Wasit Province.) The Deputy PC Chair will reportedly go to Dawlat al-Qanun's Naseef Jassem Mohammad. The second Deputy Governor slot, said Torfi, may be left empty or given to a Sadrist as a token political concession to the national post-election political understanding between Da'wa and the Sadrists.

Setting the PC Agenda from Baghdad?

¶4. (C) Torfi told us that the new PC's agenda "depends on Maliki." He said Da'wa has departed from its roots as a religious party and has now become the party of the Prime Minister and his policies. Since the new Karbala PC is

controlled by two lists closely associated with Da'wa, this may translate into de facto control of the Karbala PC by Maliki, if party discipline can be enforced. Noting that the previous PC in Karbala represented many different interests, but was ineffective because of persistent squabbling, Torfi said that the advantage of the new PC was that it had the potential to become a more effective decision-making body because it would be dominated by two political lists that both answer to the Prime Minister. On the downside, he noted the PC had the potential to represent only a single interest group and to ride roughshod over the interests and views of Qgroup and to ride roughshod over the interests and views of other local political factions. The council's main agenda, Torfi said, would be preparing for the 2010 elections. "They won't concern themselves with getting things done," he predicted.

The Gadfly

15. (C) Meanwhile, leading provincial election vote-getter Yusuf al-Haboubi (who received 37,846 votes, far more than the 6,860 and 4,854 votes captured by the winning candidates on the Amal al-Rafidain and Dawlat al-Qanun slates) disappeared from the political landscape for a month following the elections, only to emerge four days ago asserting in the press his right to be governor. (Although he would have won four seats with his vote total, al-Haboubi ran on a single-man slate giving him only one seat in the PC.) Haboubi and his spokesperson have been quoted in the press several times in recent days saying that Haboubi will appeal to the courts, and even Grand Ayatollah Sistani, to correct the injustice he perceives at being denied the

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governorship despite being the leading vote-getter.
(Comment: The PRT does not see that Haboubi has much of a legal or political case to assert a right to the governorship. He was previously tipped to join the Dawlat al-Qanun and Amal al-Rafidain government as head of the Services Committee, but we expect that Haboubi's antics will likely now relegate him to the role of a strident, but likely ineffective, populist back-bencher. End comment.)
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